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Red Tape Obstructs Moscow Housing Construction

Housing construction by individual plants in Moscow involves a great deal of red tape and loss of time. More time is required to obtain the approval of a new building plan than for the construction of the building itself. To comply with all the formalities involved, a person must have superstrong nerves and unlimited patience. Before starting on a construction project, he must go through a number of channels. The City Planning Commission must include the building in its construction plan for the city of Moscow on the basis of a number of documents, references, and communications from the respective ministries.

The Department of Land Allocation and the Administration for Architecture have to issue a decision regarding the allocation of a construction lot and the possibility of building on it. Then the Department of Land Allocation writes a special letter, according to which the order for engineering and geological surveys is given and the general construction plan is made. A plan of the building is presented to the Architectural Council for approval, accompanied by a multitude of various documents. But this is not the end. About a month passes before the plan is examined and then, most of the time, it is returned for alterations and additions. After that it is re-submitted for approval. Finally, the plan reaches the State Control for Architecture and Construction, together with 13 references from various city organizations. All this takes approximately one year. It often happens that by this time the calendar year has expired and in that case the appropriations for construction remain unused. Therefore, steps have to be taken to obtain a new appropriation, involving more loss of time. There is no doubt that the time involved in obtaining approval of a building plan could and should be considerably shortened.(2)

Emphasis on Apartment House Construction in Moscow

During 1949, there have been many shortcomings in the work of construction organizations under the Moscow Soviet. Construction of apartment houses, schools, and hospitals in Moscow has been lagging. Building costs have been too high as a result of excessive plans and estimates and poor organization. Labor productivity is low due to inadequate utilization of machinery and lack of mechanization. Industrial methods are not sufficiently used. Production of bricks, lime, alabaster, and construction parts is insufficient to meet the demand for these products. The quality of construction materials, especially bricks, is low. Reconstruction and repair of dwellings are very slow.

Eight tall buildings in Moscow are now under construction. Considerable progress has been made in the construction of the Moscow State University in Leninskiye Gory, the buildings on Smolenskaya Ploshchad', Kotel'nicheskaya Naberezhnaya, and those near Krasnyye Vorota.

During 1949, the following ministries failed to fulfill the plan for housing construction: Electric Power Plants, Construction of Heavy Industry Enterprises, Construction of Machine-Building Enterprises, Coal Industry, Petroleum Industry, Food Industry, and Metallurgical Industry. Too much money has been spent on the construction of small (one to three-story) houses in the suburbs of Moscow. During 1949, more than 500 of these suburban houses were built and 64 percent of all new housing consisted of small houses. There has been considerable construction of small houses in Moscow since the war and the Moscow City Executive Committee has not hindered this development. However, a government decree on the general reconstruction plan for the city of Moscow contains clear directions on this subject. Stalin indicated that such building practices are wrong and that it is more profitable to build multistoried houses than small houses. The Moscow Soviet and the various ministries in charge of housing construction in the city have been authorized to build multistoried houses on the main thoroughfares, on embankments, and near railroad stations, and to discontinue the construction of small houses. The Council of Ministers USSR has determined the height of buildings in accordance with the width of the streets.

- 2 -

SECRET

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SECRET

50X1-HUM

Streets with a width of 12 meters should have buildings of not less than 5-6 stories, 16-meter streets should have 7-8 story buildings, and streets over 16 meters wide should have 10, 12, and 14-story buildings.

There are over 60 contracting organizations in Moscow. In 1949, only 30 percent of the total construction work done by these organizations was housing construction. At present, the Ministry of Electric Power Plants has 14 construction sites in the city, which have been set aside for multistoried housing construction. So far, work has not even begun on nine of these construction sites. A total of over one million square meters in Moscow have been assigned to multistoried buildings; only 229,000 square meters, or 21 percent, are now under construction.(3)

Moscow Building Plans Have Shortcomings

The 1950 plan provides for 500,000 square meters of new housing in Moscow, that is, 25 percent more than in 1949. Beginning with 1951, the conversion to multistoried construction must be completed.

Plans for three new apartment houses were recently discussed by Moscow architects. An 11-story apartment house for students of the Higher Party School of TsK VKP(b) is to be built on Miusskaya ploshchad', a 13-story apartment building is to go up on Leningradskoye Highway, and 12-story apartment house on Smolenskaya Naberezhnaya. The plans have shown some shortcomings, especially with regard to interior planning of apartments, and excessive construction costs.(4)

6-Month Plan for Housing in Moscow Not Completed

Over 4 billion rubles have been assigned to the development of Moscow city economy in 1950, including 1,210,000 rubles for housing construction. However, there are serious shortcomings in the work of several construction organizations and the 6-month plan for housing construction has not been completed.(5)

Leningrad Construction Lagging

During 1949, Leningrad received 279,000 square meters of new housing. The total area of new housing planned for 1950 is 320,000 square meters. However, the general progress of construction work in Leningrad is highly unsatisfactory. Builders are lagging considerably behind the plan. This is mainly the fault of the management of construction trusts and of Party and trade union organizations. For example, Trust No 20 of the Ministry of Construction of Machine-Building Enterprises USSR operated successfully in 1949, but has slackened its efforts considerably in 1950, although the productive capacities have been increased. The trust continues to operate with outdated methods which do not meet present requirements and the quality of construction work has deteriorated. There are many other examples of this kind.

According to preliminary data, only 17 percent of the year plan for housing construction in Leningrad have been completed in 6 months. The following trusts are especially unsatisfactory in their work; Trust No 23 of the Ministry of Machine-Building Enterprises and the "Lenvuzstroy," "Lenakademstroy," "Lenspishchestroy," and "Lenlegpromstroy" trusts. Personnel, materials, and technical equipment are being scattered over numerous construction projects. Construction periods are drawn out needlessly, causing a rise in construction costs. Sometimes new buildings cannot be occupied for a long time because of minor details. Mechanical equipment is not fully utilized, a fact which is also reflected in the cost and the speed of construction work.(6)

- 3 -

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Housing Construction Fails to Keep Pace With Industry in Estonia, Komi

Housing construction in Narva, Tartu, and Tallin, Estonian SSR, has not been able to keep up with the rapid development of industry in these cities. The Ministry of Petroleum Industry USSR, and the Ministries of Coal Industry, Electrical Industry, and Light Industry should give much more attention to housing construction in the cities where they maintain their enterprises.

Housing construction, communal construction, and construction of schools, hospitals, and cultural institutions is lagging behind the development of industry in the Komi ASSR, especially in the towns of Syktyvkar, Vorkuta, Ukhta, and Pechora.(7)

Construction Lags in Tatar ASSR

The Ministry of Communal Economy Tatar ASSR and the Kazan' City Soviet are responsible for failure to fulfill the plans for housing construction and capital repair of buildings in Kazan'.(8)

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- 4 -

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